

Diverse Experiences Having An Affect On The Way I Teach

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Research Question:

How does my experience in a diverse setting affect the way I teach?

Research Methods

- This research was conducted in Selinsgrove Area School District in Snyder County, Pennsylvania. The Schools involved were Selinsgrove Elementary School and Selinsgrove Middle School.
- In order to collect data on how diversity affects the way I teach, I chose the method of personal history. I used the method, personal history, to make connections from when I was a student in elementary, middle, and high school. The environment around me, growing up, was filled with all different races and different types of teaching/learning styles.
- The other method I used was collective self-study. I looked at the diversity in my classroom to see how it would affect my teaching and how I will involve every student. I observed the way my classroom environments went as well. I compared them to the classrooms I went through in my schooling. I will be looked at how a team aspect or collaboration inside the classroom space affected my teaching. More importantly, I distinguished which learning types worked best in my classroom: Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic, or Reading/Writing. One or multiple worked for my students.
- If anything in my student teaching placement related to my experience or self-study topic, I made a note in my student teaching journal. I reviewed my journal entries weekly to see if I could connect any of my experience to what goes on in these two classrooms.
- Data was collected on the learning types students were, instead of the diversity of race.

Abstract:

The purpose of this study was how my experience, growing up in a diverse setting, helps me become the best teacher I can be. I chose to look at this issue because I grew up in a very diverse town and school district. Although, in my town, there were many different races surrounding one another. The Selinsgrove Area School District is predominantly Caucasian. In this case, I decided to observe different types of teaching/learning styles each student needed to succeed. Especially being placed in a special need's classroom, I find it very interesting how their learning styles differ. Teachers need to be flexible and use many kinds of teaching styles to see which best suits each student. My knowledge and experience of these learning strategies will benefit me in my future classroom as a teacher and how to cater each student. My personal history covers each learning style. Many of my own teachers have modeled them through visuals, auditory features, reading/writing, or having us go through the actual activity (kinesthetic). When it comes to learning some need to see it, some need to hear it and some need to do it. Some may need only one and some may learn best with all. Learning will be much more enjoyable for all once they find the perfect way to learn. Being diverse individuals, students need to find the most fitting approach to learning styles to augment their potential. I always wondered if I could master getting to know each student and matching the best learning style with them.

Conclusion:

It was found that all my students learn best in different types of styles. That is what makes the classroom so diverse and unique. Students get to experience the many types of learning everyday in different formats. Every student comes into school from a different type of home or family background. Some families are involved with their children and others are not. The ones that are not tend to be the students who struggle, such as ones in my elementary placement. In my middle school life skills placement, the parents of the students seemed to really be involved, due to the help they need for their disabilities. After looking at my findings, it seems that the types of learning styles used the most are visual, kinesthetic, and reading/writing. Many students need all three, while others only learn by one. I grew up learning through all these styles. I was a very flexible student but needed each of these types to succeed. By going through these types of learning styles and observing, I was able to translate them into my placements. I always gave many examples in lessons for my second graders for repetition. They followed along by reading and writing them down and doing the problems (kinesthetic). This was also portrayed on the board as a visual. In my special education classroom, I use many visuals for the students. My lower-level learners cannot read, so I use pictures to match with the words when teaching. For their math, the students go through the same routine everyday and the same types of problems to remember the skills needed. All classrooms contain diversity, whether it be teaching/learning styles, race, ethnicity, culture, or types of family background. This is what makes a classroom so special to be apart of. I have brought my past experiences of diversity to my teaching in my placements and future classroom.

Findings:

- It was very difficult to find data in my first placement at Selinsgrove Elementary. The school and district is predominantly Caucasian. I turned my work around to different learning/teaching styles or the variety of backgrounds or family types the students come from. A lot of students came from homes of divorced parents. Also, many of the students' parents did not give their child the attention and support needed. Lots of assignments on Seesaw, the online platform, were not submitted by certain students, while others always completed theirs. Growing up, I was surrounded with many friends of divorced parents or only a single parent. Some of my peers were not cared for, so it resulted in them believing they could do anything they wanted. Others, like me, had parents who assisted them in many things. I was able to help comfort and create bonds with these students by relating their backgrounds to my friends who I grew up with.
- In my other placement, the environment is diverse based on the students type of disability or disabilities. Also, there were different races, ethnicities, and cultures with this group of students. To focus on the disabilities, it was key to have many visual learning strategies, as well as, Kinesthetic, and Reading/Writing. These students differed with mild disabilities to severe disabilities. A lot of the students with mild disabilities learned best visually. On the other hand, students with multiple or severe disabilities, learned best by all strategies combined, especially reading/writing and kinesthetic to go through everything repeatedly. Repetition is key for students with disabilities. They will start to remember the pattern of how to do things.

Data From References:

- “Recent research has made it fairly clear that different students have different LSs.[10,11,12] LSPs are significantly different in males and females.[13] Read-write and kinesthetic learners who adopt a deep approach learning strategy perform better academically than do the auditory, visual learners who employ superficial study strategies.[14] Much work has been done on studying the individual learning preferences and how instructional methods can be tailored to cater to the different styles” (Bhagat, Singh, Vyas 2015).
- “This we propose is made up of three key factors; firstly, understanding ethnically diverse students home culture (Gay 2002; Ladson-Billings 1995a, 1995b; Nieto 1999; Young 2010) secondly, understanding the role of culture in the classroom (Gay 2000; Villegas and Lucas 2002) and, thirdly, the notion of cultural competence (Santoro 2013). In helping to develop and structure this paper, we define ethnically diverse students as *students whose background, ethnicity and experiences differ from the dominant Western culture*” (Gay 2002; Jabbar and Hardaker 2013; Nieto 1999).
- “While more on-site, practical learning field experiences in diverse settings are an ideal means of preparing future teachers, that option is not always available. Another very real opportunity for exposing education students to issues of diversity is through carefully selected literature. For this work, it means carefully selected Contemporary Realistic Fiction. This literary genre has the potential, when combined with in-depth discussions and meaningful activities, to help education students develop a more open-minded, accepting attitude toward, as well as a deeper knowledge base about, such differences” (Gibson 2012).

References:

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